

THE ROLE OF THE CITY HALL COORDINATOR IN ESTABLISHING A CONDOMINIUM OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

When tenants in state-owned apartment houses became the owners of their buildings, it was necessary to change the relationship between the local government and the new owners. A pilot program was developed in the City of Braşov, beginning in early 1994, to define the new relationship and to help the owners establish Owners' Associations so they can begin to operate and manage their buildings more effectively.

As a result of this experience, we can offer the following suggestions to other cities who wish to undertake a similar program:

Appoint a City Hall Coordinator

The first step is for the leadership of the city (the Mayor or Vice Mayor) to designate a City Hall Coordinator for the program. The support and participation of high-level elected officials is very important to the success of the program, so the Coordinator should be a person who can work well with the Mayor, the Local Council, the Prefectura, and other officials, as well as with the public.

The Coordinator should be well acquainted with the activities and problems of the Tenants' Associations, and should understand that a new form of organization is necessary for operating privately owned property. The Coordinator must be capable of explaining to the new owners how an Owners' Association is organized and how it will operate.

Select Buildings and Building Leaders

To determine which buildings are interested in participating in the program, the Coordinator should distribute a questionnaire throughout the city. A sample questionnaire is attached as Annex 1. The City Hall Coordinator should select buildings with a large majority of owners who are willing to form an association and take over management of the property.

In each building that responds with a high level of interest, the Coordinator should identify one or two individual owners who have strong leadership capabilities and enjoy the respect of the other owners in the building. These persons should become the contact between the City Hall Coordinator and the other owners in the building.

Meet with Owners and Distribute Materials

The City Hall Coordinator should offer to meet with the owners at their building to discuss the program, answer the owners' questions, and help the owners decide whether they want to form an Owners' Association. At the meeting, the Coordinator can distribute written public information materials on condominiums.

When the owners meet, a person who has been acting as a leader can chair the meeting. If the owners vote to form an Owners' Association, they should hold an election of officers and/or an executive committee.

Select Legal, Technical, and Financial Experts

At the same time the City Hall Coordinator is determining which buildings are interested in establishing an Owners' Association, the Coordinator and other representatives of the city should be selecting persons who can assist the new Owners' Associations with legal, financial, and technical matters. These persons do not have to work for the city; they may be working in the private sector. The most important attributes to look for in selecting these persons are their expertise in their respective areas, and their understanding and support of the condominium concept.

The experts should be able to offer services to interested buildings, such as legal assistance with registration of the Owners' Association, technical inspection of buildings, and help with budgeting and financial recordkeeping. There are other handbooks in this series to help the experts understand how they can assist new Owners' Associations. The Coordinator's role is to facilitate communication between the experts and the owners.

Assist with Registration of Owners' Association

An Owners' Association must have a statute adopted by the owners, approved by a notary, and registered with the court. The legal expert can help prepare the necessary documents. Approval of the Local Council is also needed for the Owners' Association to have nonprofit status.

Assist with Separation from Tenants' Association

In some cases, owners may want to establish an Owners' Association comprised of fewer units or buildings than the Tenants' Association to which they formerly belonged. The City Hall Coordinator can assist with notification to the Tenants' Association and coordination with the experts to resolve technical or financial issues that may arise. See Annex 3.

Assist with Training in Condominium Operations and Management

The City Hall Coordinator and the legal, financial, and technical experts must become thoroughly familiar with the contents of the Condominium Operations and Management Training Manual. When they have done that, and have visited the buildings to become familiar with the owners and the properties, the Coordinator should organize a training seminar so that the members of the executive committees and other persons in the community who are interested in providing services to condominiums can become more familiar with what is involved in managing the properties. Other persons might include construction and repair firms, insurance companies, realtors, accountants, and the like.

It is very important to develop support and understanding of the project at all levels of the local government and among others involved in setting policy for the city. For that reason, representatives of the Prefecture, the County Council, the Local Council and the Regies supplying services to condominiums should also be invited to training seminars in condominium management.

The owners and other persons who attend the training can be asked to pay a small fee to cover the cost of the materials, and compensation for the experts that will be speaking.

Provide Public Information

It is not possible for the City Hall Coordinator to talk personally with every citizen who is interested in knowing more about condominiums. He/she should arrange to publicize the program in the mass media and through distribution of written public information materials. Radio, television, and newspaper reporters should be informed when a significant event, such as a training session, takes place. Interviews with the Coordinator, the experts, and representatives of Owners' Associations should be encouraged.

by
Cicerone Stan
City of Braşov, Romania

**TO RESIDENTS OF PRIVATIZED
HOUSING BLOCKS IN THE CITY OF _____**

The City of _____ is starting a project to help owners in apartment buildings organize an Owners' Association. We would like to know if your building is interested in participating in this project.

The project is designed to improve housing conditions through cooperation by the residents. The residents will be organized into an association called an Owners' Association. The members of the Owners' Association will vote to make decisions about the building. No decisions relating to the project will be made without the approval of at least a majority of the owners. We believe an Owners' Association will help you improve the operation and management of your building.

The project will demonstrate methods and practices used in the United States and Western Europe by residents who own apartments in their buildings. These buildings are called "condominiums."

Only a limited number of buildings will be selected to participate in this project. The residents of a building should get together and vote on whether or not they want to participate. To be eligible to participate, a majority of the residents must agree to do so. Then they should submit the application attached to this announcement. Before any building is selected, a group of experts will meet with the residents to answer your questions and get more information about your building.

Send the application, NO LATER THAN _____ to:

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING APPLICATION

1. Organize a meeting of all residents of the building to discuss and vote on whether or not to participate in the pilot project.
2. Each apartment should have one vote. You can vote on ballots or by raising hands, whichever you prefer.
3. Count the votes of owners of apartments separately from those of tenants.
4. If your building votes in favor of participating, select a representative to fill out the application form and return it to City Hall.
5. Only one form should be submitted for each building that would like to participate.
6. In selecting sites for the pilot project, preference will be given to buildings where a high percentage of residents wish to participate.

[illegible]

APPLICATION FOR PARTICIPATION IN PILOT PROJECT

[Please Print or Type]

1. Address of Building: _____
2. Number of Privately Owned Apartments: _____
3. Number of Rental Apartments: _____
4. Results of Vote

Privately Owned Apartments:

In Favor _____ Opposed _____ Did Not Vote _____

Rental Apartments:

In Favor _____ Opposed _____ Did Not Vote _____

5. Application Submitted By (*Representative of Building*):

Name: _____

Apt. No.: _____ Tel: _____(day) _____(eve)